



HISTORY OF

JOHN MURRAY MURDOCH JR. & WIVES

MINNIE MARIE MILLER

CORA LEONA VAIL BIGLER

John Murray Murdoch, Jr., was born May 1, 1874, in Heber City, Wasatch County, Utah. He was the sixth of seven children born to Isabella Crawford and John Murray Murdoch. Isabella was John's plural wife. There were twenty-two children in the family, and though there were two different mothers the children interacted as though it was one big happy family, which indeed it was, until plural marriage became unlawful and the families had to be separated.

John M., Jr., was only about seventeen years old when his father was arrested for living in polygamy. John, Sr., asked the federal officials if he could go home and get a change of clothing; he promised that he would present himself at the penitentiary to serve a one-month sentence. He was given permission to go home. He gathered the articles he needed and presented himself at the penitentiary for imprisonment. The prison officials had no entry papers for him but he insisted on serving his sentence. This determination to keep his word must have greatly impressed his namesake. John Murray, Jr., was heard to say many times, "A man is only as good as his word," and "My word is my bond." These phrases have been passed down to his sons and daughters and grandchildren.

John grew up in the beautiful valley surrounding Heber City, Utah. He loved the serenity and calm of the valley surrounded by ranges of towering mountains.

Jack, as he was called by most who knew him, was a tall, handsome young man with soft, brown, wavy hair. He was, according to those who knew him, shy but nevertheless popular with the pretty girls of Heber, Midway, and Park City.

He was able, however, to elude any girls who had designs on him until he was almost thirty years old. Then, never dreaming that heartache would so soon enter his life, he married Minnie Miller. Minnie was the second child of Nelson Miller and Annie Michelson.

Minnie's mother had died when Minnie was ten years old, and her father when she was twenty-one. As the oldest daughter she had assumed a great deal of responsibility for the care and raising of the younger children. As she grew older she moved to Salt Lake City, where she worked in the homes of several families. One of her employers was Emeline Wells, whom she considered the meanest woman in the world.

John and Minnie were married on January 30, 1904, and later, on October 31, 1907, were sealed in the Salt Lake Temple. Their first home was in Deer Valley, a part of Park City. Very little is known of their life together, other than that they shared sorrow at the loss of their two infant daughters, Minnie and Annabelle. It is little wonder, then, that Bessie, who was born February 28, 1909, was a great joy in their lives. Minnie was an excellent seamstress, and always had Bessie dressed beautifully with her hair brushed and curled. On November 18, 1911, another child blessed their home. Minnie had little opportunity to enjoy this baby boy. Father just nine short years of marriage, just one month to the day after the birth of her first son, Raymond, John's beloved Minnie passed away, leaving him with two very young children. John had fervently hoped that Minnie could get better, and had pled with her not to leave him with the two babies to raise. He knew that he and they both desperately needed her. His pleading, however, was in vain. Finally, the doctor who was attending Minnie told him that she was so ill he must let her go, and so, to his great sorrow, she passed to the other side.

It must have been very cold that winter because John froze his toes when he was accompanying Minnie's body from Park City to Heber City for burial. The snow was so deep that the horses would not go unless they were led so John walked in front of them all the way. He did not get the benefit of the warm bricks and blankets brought for those who rode in the sleigh.

After Minnie's death, her brother and sister-in-law, Nels and Etta Miller, asked permission to have Bessie return to Idaho with them. John was anxious to have the two children together and so would not let her go. Instead, he had the children remain with sister, Kate Hicken, who had come to take them when Minnie died.

There, with the Hickens, Ray and Bessie grew up together in the warmth of a loving family where "borrowed" children were well loved and cared for. Kathryn and her husband, David, became Papa and Mama to Bessie and Ray. The children were warmly accepted into the family and shared a close, warm relationship with the Hicken children that lasted all their lives.

With the children well cared for at the Hicken's home, John returned to the mines at Park City and, undoubtedly, to a lonely existence. He visited the children as often as he could. They were always excited to see this handsome man. One of Bessie's favorite activities was combing his hair, and John, with great patience, was always willing to let her do it.

John was remembered by his children and his step-children as being a loving and patient person who consistently tried to teach them good principles.

His self-control was exemplary, and his strongest words were said by his children to be "my word." When he was really disgruntled, he always said MY WORD in capital letters. When the children misbehaved, a "Scotch blessing" was in order.

One bright summer day Ann Hicken, Ray, and Bessie and some neighborhood friends, were wading on the lawn on watering day. Papa watered from the ditch, and it was great fun to go wading. Bessie said a bad word that started with S. John heard her and invited her to go for a walk with him. She enjoyed being with him, so was thrilled to follow along. They sat on the cool, shady porch on the north of the Hicken home, and John said to her, "Bessie, I heard a dirty word come from your mouth today. Can you remember what it was?" She said, "No, daddy." "Think hard," he said, and told her what she was doing when she said it. She thought and thought and finally said, "Oh, now I know it. I said s---." "Yes," he said. "Now I want to tell you something. Never let anything come out of your mouth that you wouldn't put in it." This was a great lesson that Bessie always remembered.

Jock used to say of himself, "I am a man of few words, but very eloquent." Cora Vail Bigler, his second wife, would say of him, "Jock is a shy, and quiet man, and he doesn't speak lightly. But when he does speak, his words are carefully thought out and are, indeed, eloquent. One waits for Jock to speak; his dignity and bearing give added weight to his spoken word."

Jock continued to work in the mines of Park City, visiting his children whenever he could. Time passed, and he was asked to serve a mission for the LDS Church in New Zealand. This was a difficult time for Jock. He was already separated from his children most of the time, and this would mean a total separation for several years. But he accepted the call, and when he was ready to leave, the whole Hicken family, including his mother, Isabella Crawford Murdoch, who was living with the Hickens, walked to the depot to see him leave on the Heber Creeper.

His children sorely missed him, as his visits had been a delight to them, but theirs was a background of being taught to serve the Lord as asked, and so they waited patiently for his return. There was great excitement when his all-too-infrequent letters arrived from the far-away land where he labored on his mission. He rode the train to San Francisco, where he and several other missionaries caught a boat for New Zealand. One of those missionaries was Matthew Cowley, who was later called to be an Apostle. Matthew was just seventeen and Jock Murdoch was over forty, but they developed a real love for one another. They spoke often of one another after their return.

They traveled seventeen or eighteen days by boat and landed in Wellington, where they were met by mission personnel and traveled on to Auckland, where the mission headquarters were. The first night in Auckland, the new missionaries met for prayer, and Brother Miller, the elder in charge, called on Jock to pray. Silence greeted the group as nothing happened. Jock soon said that he could not pray and left the group. In a later conversation with Brother Miller, it came to light that Jock had not been particularly close to the Church during the years just before his mission and felt uncomfortable giving a public prayer at that time. It was thought by Brother Miller that Jock was very lonely, and that either he or his bishop had been inspired to have him serve a mission to help him grow closer to the Lord and learn to cope with his great grief and loneliness at the loss of his wife. (Elder Miller, now over ninety years old, resides in Idaho Falls, Idaho, and was interviewed by John Murray's granddaughter, Ann D. Bingham, in May 1980.)

Jock was assigned to the South Island near Christchurch. It was a difficult assignment, since just a few years before that time a Mormon Elder had been killed there, and there was great animosity toward the Church.

Although he was busy with the business of his mission, Jock's diary gives evidence that Minnie was still in his thoughts. On the first page, dated August 13, 1915, the following poem is written:

Thoughts of My Wife

But now she sleeps where the daisy's nod
And the clover hangs its head
Where the wild birds come
And the wild bees hum
Above her lonely bed
She fought the fight
She kept the faith
Her fame shines bright and clear
And her memory lives in my heart
Which will ever hold her dear.

By the time Jock had been on his mission six months, he had truly caught the vision of the missionary work, and was described by Brother Miller as a humble, faithful, dedicated missionary. Many reports were received that he was doing good work. Although he was shy at the beginning of his mission, his shyness seemed to disappear as he became involved in the missionary work.

His diary shows that much time was devoted to study and reading. The general pace of life seemed to be leisurely. The missionaries traveled either by horse or bicycle most of the time. When the distance was long, they went by train or boat. Most of their long distance communication was by wire.

Learning the language was difficult. John recorded in his missionary diary that his first preaching in the Maori language was done on January 22, 1916. Life was not always pleasant and easy. The missionaries were tormented by fleas and mosquitoes on some occasions so badly that they could not sleep. Typhoid fever was a frequent problem.

Jock's diary tells of the common tasks of the missionaries in that time and place. Catching the horses, milking the cows, fixing the fences, and traveling were common to them. They spent much time with the Maori people, and many Maori words slip into the writing of the diary.

Horses, the main mode of travel for Jock and his companion, were also occasionally a source of grief. In his diary on May 31, 1916, he wrote:

Arose early, held prayer, tried to get Elder Schofield up, too sleepy. Got my horse. Trying to catch them, I slipped and fell down the hill on the wet grass. After breakfast I started for TeHoro to carige horses the road was wet and muddy. Arrived at TeHoro about 12 noon. Went to our paddock, chased the horses, lost my bag of books, my horse got away, chased him around through the boxsiers. I was thinking of getting mad.

This entry provides a good example of Jock's extraordinary patience and forbearance.

Priesthood meetings were held monthly, often at the home of a member. Jock tells of one conference held in a large tent. One shilling was solicited from each person for food. They came by train and horseback and on boats to attend the conference. There were many people there.

Jock's willingness to continue to serve the Lord is recorded in his diary on his birthday, May 1, 1916, when he reflected on being there for the second birthday and hoped that there would be another and perhaps more if he were asked to stay.

Jock's children, however, were glad that Jock did not stay an extra-long time on his mission. It was a joyful day when he returned and was reunited with his children. It was a nice summer day, and the children were playing outside barefooted on the grass when a surrey with fringe on top drove up and John got out with his trunks and bags. At first the children didn't know him, but they recognized his hair, which was still wavy. He had grown a mustache. When the children realized their father had returned, they jumped for joy.

To add to their excitement, he had brought trinkets and treasures from New Zealand, not only for his children, but for the nieces, nephews, and other family members. Maori beads and lap robes made of sheepskin were among the gifts he brought.

Jock had many missionary companions, but spoke most often upon his return of Matthew Cowley, predicting that he would hold a high position in the Church, which he later did.

Brother Cowley also talked of Jock. Many relatives reported hearing mention made of Jock in Brother Cowley's conference talks throughout the Church. On one occasion, while in Idaho Falls, Idaho, Bessie was in the audience to hear one of these talks and after introduced herself to Elder Cowley as Jock's daughter. The apostle gave her a warm welcome and told her of his great love for her father. He spoke of what a good man he was and how he was very lonely when his wife passed away and how he had missed Ray and Bessie while on his mission. Jock, he said, was most grateful for his dear sister Kate and her husband Dave and how good they were to the children.

After his return from his mission, Jock returned to work in the mines in Park City as shift boss, and again would visit his children on weekends when the weather permitted. He was known as one of the "Park City Bunch" and numbered among his friends some of the prominent mining investors of Park City. Jock had a reputation for integrity with these men.

Jock loved fishing and baseball. He didn't live too far from the Provo River and this was his favorite spot to fish. Jock also had great love for his family, brothers

and sisters, parents, and his children. Indeed, he had a great love for everyone, especially little children. He was always asking them what their pretty name was, and if they had a cold, he wiped their noses.

Jock loved music and played several instruments. He had a steel guitar and a violin, which he played often. He, Bessie, and Ray would play together with Jock playing the violin, Ray the mouth organ, and Bessie chording on the piano.

After his mission he would often play his violin and sing Maori songs to his own children and his nieces and nephews, often teaching them the words. Bessie, Ray, and Ann would often sing them in primary. While Ray and Bessie were living near, the three of them continued to sing the songs together when they met.

Another of Jock's great loves was attending Murdoch reunions. He delighted in dressing up and marching in the parade. The whole family enjoyed meeting all their "kin-folk," and each reunion became a fond memory. Jock's daughter, Bessie, kept up the tradition, and truly enjoyed being the life of the Murdoch reunion party. Some time after Jock's return home to Heber, a young widow, Cora Vail Bigler, became the postmistress of Midway, Utah. Her husband had been tragically killed by lightning, leaving her with two small daughters to raise. Cora, the daughter of John Riley Vail and Alice White, had grown up in Midway and knew of Jock's mission to New Zealand and of the loss of his wife. One day he just walked into the Midway post office, and they began to chat. In time they began to keep company. Cora was aware of Jock's still-deep sorrow over his wife's early death. Jock was aware of Cora's still being shattered by the death of her twenty-six year-old husband. They knew that each had two children. Jock had a pre-teen daughter and a young son. Cora had two daughters ages three and one and a half.

Despite the challenges they saw, Jock and Cora married on January 3, 1921. They were married in the Salt Lake Temple for time only, knowing they cared for each other, but differently than the love they each felt for their first spouses. There were step children to be loved and adjusted to, and new parents for the children to learn to love.

For a time all lived in the nice home with running water, which Ray and Bessie thought quite special since in Heber they still used an outside privy and coal stove, as many others did in those days.

Cora's two daughters, Freida and Wanda, were very young, and found John to be an extraordinary father. He provided a good home and was, all in all, patient and loving. Each day they would run two blocks to Jacobsen's Store to meet him and walk back home with him holding his hands.

Things did not go so happily for Bessie and Ray, who were older at the time of the marriage and had more difficulty adjusting. Ray soon returned to the only parents he had ever really known, Mama and Papa Hicken. Bessie lived with Jock and Cora long enough to graduate from Park City High School and then left to live first with friends in Park City and then with her mother's brother and his wife in Idaho.

John enjoyed surprises. On one occasion John, Cora, and Cora's sister and her husband, Elsie and Orville, went for a horseback ride. They started up where the Wasatch State Park is now. John wouldn't tell them where they were going. He wanted to surprise them, he said. They rode up, up, and up the mountain until either on purpose or accidentally they got lost. They wandered up the very steep mountain top. A terrible rainstorm came and really drenched them. They wandered some more and came upon a sheepherder's wagon. They broke in and made some coffee to warm them up. The storm went on for a long time. The sheepherder came back to his wagon and found his uninvited guests. He cooked them a good hot meal and had to escort them down the face of the mountain. John would never admit whether he got lost or

whether it really was a "special" horseback ride. The "new route" over Brighton today is still a scary, rocky road, and goes to Brighton from Park City. From that time on he was to be almost constantly in and out of the hospital.

On August 17, 1926, during one of his many hospital stays, a baby girl, Phyllis Beth, was born to John and Cora. She was adored and cherished by her older half brother and sisters. But once again Jock's time with a child would be cut short, this time by his own death.

During Jock's stays in the hospital, Matthew Cowley visited him almost daily. Also, his mission president, President Lambert, was superintendent of the hospital, and saw that he had very good care. He even brought him to Park City to see the family just after Phyllis Beth was born.

John still had the home he and Minnie had occupied in Heber City, where he had stored many of his things in the upstairs while renting out the first floor. The home was close to his parent's home in the northwest end of Heber. He said he wanted to live and die in Heber, so during the illness he and Cora moved back to Heber. Cora, knowing that she would need a way to make a living, went to Salt Lake City to learn the barber and beauty trade.

While Bessie was in nurses training in Idaho, John often wrote her, instructing her to better herself, to write often, and to write to Ray and to Mama and Papa Hicken, to be a good girl and make all of them proud of her, and to remember to go to church and pay her tithing and remember her prayers, and Heavenly Father would bless her.

Jock seemed to know when his time on earth was growing short, and he was sad about leaving his family. He would hold Phyllis on his knee and say, "If I could live to help raise this baby." He had left Bessie and Ray as young children to fill his mission, and now seemed to know that he would again have to leave a child in the care of others.

John died on April 26, 1928, in Heber. He was very ill for a long time, and his last days were far from pleasant as he suffered from ostiomylitis, for which there was then no cure. He was buried next to Minnie in the Heber City Cemetery.

Before John's death, Bessie had moved to Idaho. In May, 1930, she graduated with an R.N. degree. During her training she met her future husband, Oliver P. Dawson. They were married May 29, 1930, just after her graduation. At that time Oliver was the manager of the Boise Payette Lumber Company in Shelley. That same year they built a new home in Shelley, where they lived until November, 1949, when they moved to Idaho Falls. Bessie lived in Idaho Falls the rest of her life. Although Oliver did not share her religious beliefs, she remained active and faithful in the Church throughout her life. She served as a stake missionary and as a Relief Society president, as well as in other Church positions.

Bessie and Oliver had three children: Oliver Murray, who resides in Cody, Wyoming; Ann Bingham, who lived in Idaho Falls, Idaho; and James Murdoch (J.M.), who lives in Kaysville, Utah. Oliver had a daughter, Betty Jean, who was six years old when they married, and she lived with them until she completed high school. Betty lives in Sunnyvale, California.

Bessie passed away on February 12, 1980. In her history, which was written by her husband, Oliver, he said, "Her entire life was devoted first to myself and her family and gave us full support and love, never once did she fail to give any of us her full knowledge obtained in her earlier training, with her love and training she had brought all of us love and life to this day. Second on her list was the Church which she believed in sincerely and supported."

Bessie will be sorely missed by her family and the countless friends she made wherever she was.

Ray grew up in Heber. He was active in scouting and received the first Eagle badge to be awarded in Wasatch County. He was active in drama, sports, speech, and music. He was drum major for the Wasatch High School Band.

In 1932 he won a music scholarship to Weber College. While attending Weber he met Shirley Dickson, and after their graduation from Weber they were married June 27, 1934, in the Salt Lake Temple. In the fall of that year they moved to Logan, where Ray attended U.S.U. He worked for twenty-five cents an hour on the experiment farm, while Shirley baby sat for a dollar a day.

In 1937 Ray graduated from the Agricultural College, and they moved to Blanding, where he was hired as an Ag teacher.

After living in Blanding for three years, they moved to Princeton, California, where Ray taught school. He got interested in bees, and soon had so many hives he decided to give up teaching and buy a farm. In December, 1949, Ray and Shirley moved to Yuba City, California. Here they had prunes, peaches, almonds, cattle, and bees. The flood of 1955 took all the bees, so after that they just farmed.

Ray always took an active part in the Church and community affairs. He was a good teacher, scout leader, stake Sunday School superintendent, and ward teacher supervisor. He sang in the ward choir for many years.

He was president of the Bee Breeders Association, high school board, and vice president of the Tax Payers Association.

Ray and Shirley have three children: RaShirl J., who is a teacher at Chico, California; Larry E., who is supervisor for the Oakland Sector FAA; and a daughter, Eulene, whose husband is chief master sergeant in the U.S.A.F. There are three grandchildren, Bert E. Murdoch, David Morgan, and Mindy Morgan.

Ray passed away, from cancer, October 30, 1975. He was a good husband and a good father, and his family miss him very much, but know they will be with him again.

Following John Murray Murdoch Jr's death his wife, Cora, was once again a widow with three young daughters to raise. Frieda and Wanda Bigler from her first marriage and Phyllis Murdoch the daughter of John Murray Murdoch Jr.

Cora married one year later to a James Earl Wall on the 22 January 1929. He had three children from a previous marriage that lived with them also. A son, Earl Vail Wall, was born to Cora and James on the 26 July 1930. Cora and James were eventually divorced in 1943. James died on the 22 March 1961.

Cora worked as a beautician in Park City to help support her family for many years. She went through many trials in her life with two husbands dying after only a short time of being married to each of them. In later years she married for the fourth time to Jack Esmond McKnight on the 23 May 1953. He however died also on the 24 August 1957.

Cora served two missions for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. One to the Southern States and the other to Florida. She passed away the 10 September 1970 in Salt Lake City, Utah and was buried in Midway, Wasatch, Utah.

John and Cora's daughter, Phyllis Murdoch Giolas, writes the following: "Phyllis Murdoch Giolas was born 17 August 1926 in Park City, Summit County, Utah. Her place of birth was a humble home located on 1015 Park Avenue. Her parents were Cora Loemma (Leona) Vail Bigler and John Murray Murdoch Jr., both of Heber City and Midway, Wasatch County, Utah. Her young years were spent in simple pleasures, unaware of the heartaches and sorrows of others.

Phyllis completed her Primary and Secondary schooling in Midway and Park City, Utah, graduating with honors from Park City High School in May 1944. She had completed two years of college when illness forced her to discontinue her studies.

Phyllis made her life full of fun and church activities. Her mother encouraged her in the cultural arts and Phyllis was fortunate in being able to sing and play the flute, guitar and piano. She played roles in plays, musicals and operettas. She loved her life and busy schedule.

The world at war in 1944 provided Phyllis the opportunity to learn a trade when she was employed as an aircraft mechanic at Hill Air Force Base, Ogden Utah. She also worked for the Geneo-logical Society of Utah. She received further technical training when she was employed by Mountain States Telephone Company.

Phyllis married James "J" Giolas, son of James Peter and Annie Haines Shepherd Giolas on 6 June 1947 in the Salt Lake Temple. Phyllis and James were blessed with three Children: James Richard Giolas, born 21 January 1950. "Rick" enjoyed his church and scout activities. He earned his Duty to God and Eagle Scout awards. He graduated from Skyline High School, Salt Lake City, Utah in 1968. He progressed from a Safeway Bag Boy to Safeway Incorporated Management. He inherited the shy quiet dignity of his grandfather, John Murray Murdoch Jr. He loved to sing in groups and Madrigals. He enjoyed work and play with the youth of his ward. Rick married Gay Lynne Martin, daughter of Gary Martin and Janice Chadwick Martin, both of American Fork and Salt Lake City, Utah, in the Salt Lake Temple on 30 June 1970.

John Murdoch Giolas, born 29 July 1960. He was a long-awaited adopted baby. He was sealed to his parents in the Salt Lake Temple on 15 August 1961. He graduated from Skyline High School, Salt Lake City, Utah in 1978. He attended the University of Utah and became employed by Pameco-Aire Inc. of Salt Lake City, Utah. John too, developed the sweet reserved manner of his grandfather John Murray Murdoch Jr.

Lisa Ann Giolas, born 3 August 1962, also a loved adopted baby, was sealed to her parents in the Salt Lake Temple on 15 June 1964. She graduated with honors from Skyline High School, Salt Lake City, Utah in 1980. Her plans include attendance at the University of Utah in 1980. Lisa has developed the Murdoch talents to make life for herself and others, full and happy.

Phyllis was blessed with three grandchildren born to James Richard and Gay Lynne Martin Giolas, Andrea Giolas, James Martin Giolas, and Amanda Giolas

Phyllis fulfilled a Stake Mission. She served as a Primary and Relief Society President. She served in many stake and ward positions. She also was privileged to serve as secretary for her Vail-White Family Organization.

Phyllis proud of her Scottish Murdoch, and her Vail-White English-Irish heritage, has found that the combination of her blood lines give her many blessings. The gift of discernment sometimes told ahead of events to take place. She sews, sings, enjoys church activities, and genealogy work. She loves fun, happy times. Her life evolves around her family and her church.

She has a knowledge of the truthfulness of the gospel. She knows God does live and that as long as she heeds his word and obeys his will, that he will pour His blessings and love upon her. She knows too, that if she but listens to that "still small voice" (who sometimes has to yell to be heard!) that she can be strong and able to help her family through trials and hardships that have and will yet come to them. This would be in fulfillment of her patriarchal blessing. "

JOHN MURRAY MURDOCH JR. FAMILY PICTURES



BESSIE MURDOCH



JOHN MURRAY MURDOCH JR. &
MINNIE MARIE MILLER MURDOCH



LEFT TO RIGHT BACK: Beverly S. Dawson, Darold L. and Ann Dawson Bingham,
Betty Dawson and Dick Kamarath, Goldie M. Dawson.
LEFT TO RIGHT MIDDLE: James M. Dawson, Bessie Murdoch Dawson, Oliver P. Dawson,
Oliver M. Dawson.
LEFT TO RIGHT FRONT: Jeri J. Dawson, Rick Kamarath, Cynthia M. Dawson, Nancy
Dawson, Gary Kamarath, Ted M. Dawson.